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ABSTRACT

The "Jenks Wild" project was developed at the Jenks Central Middle School (Oklahoma) to train middle school teachers in leadership development. The training program involved teacher, student, parent, community, and administrative representatives and emphasized experiences that helped participants to recognize the value of other dimensions of the school experience. A "school-out-of-doors" approach was used to stress the various dimensions of leadership, and each group of participants had differing assignments to reach the collective goal of strengthening leadership within its own group and within the total school structure. (CB)

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Leadership Development In The Wild
"Jenks Wild"

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Leadership Development In The Wild
"Jenks Wild"

LEADERSHIP DEFINED

There are as many definitions of effective leadership as there are leaders, and there is a leader any time two or more people gather to accomplish a common goal. Most students of leadership in education agree that two threads run throughout the fabric of leadership. Although these two threads are often called by different names, one thread represents the interest of the organization and the other the interests of the individuals comprising the organization (Hanson, 1985).

In the construction of garments, when threads are improperly woven, a tear or break frequently occurs in the fabric. In organizational behavior when the formal leader fails to consider both the institutional goals and the individual needs while making a decision in a particular situation, the result is likely to be loss in productivity. Indeed, formal leadership may emerge that is counterproductive to the goals of the institution. Evidence of this is sometimes found in classrooms with students in open rebellion, in teachers' lounges where teachers gleefully describe administrative blunders, and in parent organizations attempting to usurp board of education authority.

Quality schools are those that demonstrate concern for both institutional goals and individual needs. Peter Drucker's observation that effectiveness can be defined as doing the right things and efficiency as doing things right gives direction to school administrators and teachers truly interested in providing quality educational programs for students. Effectiveness and efficiency become equally important goals (Drucker, 1954).

One of the most popular leadership training devices used with executives in recent years has two axes; one plotting concern for people and the other a concern from production. They are interactive. This Managerial Grid has been used to help executives develop skills needed to acquire a leadership style that results in the organizational purpose and in the development of trust and respect in the superordinate/subordinate relationships (Blake, 1964). The objectives of the leadership development

program for each of the five target groups comprising the "Jenks Wild" project reflect a desire to provide all participants with an opportunity to acquire these skills. To that end the Managerial Grid approach with its somewhat flexible leadership styles (depending upon the problem situation) serves as a model for project activities.

Flexibility of leadership style is an important consideration for the "Jenks Wild" project because it recognizes that different situations call for different kinds of leadership (Sergiovanni, 1984). Indeed there are times when the major thrust should be that of task orientation and times when a relations orientation is required. Knowing when to adopt a task orientation and when to take the relations route is a primary requisite for both formal and informal leaders (Tannenbaum & Schmidt, 1958). Evidence indicates that neither approach is consistently more effective than the other. Each works well under certain conditions (Fielder, 1987).

The "Jenks Wild" project also recognizes that leadership is not always fixed within an individual but frequently shifts among group members as the needs of the group change. When at camp the needs of the group are sometimes quite different than on campus and opportunities exist for new leaders to emerge. A primary goal of the project is to encourage the development of more leadership roles and responsibilities among faculty and students.

Movement away form the classical traditional approach to leadership toward the participative management style is perhaps no better explained than in McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y orientation (McGregor, 1960). Theory X is associated with coercion, threats, pressures while Theory Y holds management responsible for creating a work environment that encourages individuals to assume responsibility for themselves and the organization. This Theory Y approach is the foundation for all the activities included in the "Jenks Wild" experience.

LEADERSHIP PLANNED AND DEVELOPED

In our efforts to design a quality "school out-of-doors" we began with a training program involving representatives from all the public considered a part of the Jenks Central Middle School community: teachers, students, parents, community representatives, and administrators. Both dimensions of leadership were stressed throughout the formal training sessions and the informal curricular activities conducted before, during, and after the five-day "school out-of-doors."

It was determined that training would employ programs previously found to be successful by coaches, scouting programs, and the Young Mens Christian Association. A Y.M.C.A. camp was rented for one week with 176 sixth grade students participating. Six teachers attended on a full time basis, with seventeen participating as their schedules permitted. Twenty-five parents, five community representatives, and seven administrators were also involved; some full-time and others part-time.

Leadership development began when three teachers responded enthusiastically to the challenge of organizing and implementing an experience-based approach to learning in a natural environment. Once responsibility was accepted by these three faculty members, the principal stepped back, and thereafter decision making was primarily in their domain. Thus, the three "directors" began to develop administrative leadership skills while the principal strengthened listening and sharing skill, and experienced the power of delegation.

Among the participants were teachers selected by the directors to develop a curriculum for particular disciplines to be taught using an interdisciplinary approach relating subjects to the environment. Directors provided these participants with training for this task using professionals in environmental studies. The parent volunteer group, already in existence, developed communication and interpersonal skills for recruiting camp counselors from parents of children planning to attend the camp. Cabin assignments were made in such a way as to guarantee breaking up existing student cliques so that students would have the opportunity to get to know more of their classmates. In the process, existing student leadership was strengthened and new student leaders emerged.

LEADERSHIP ESTABLISHED

Specific objectives and activities for each of the five target groups as well as recommendations for future camp activities follow.

Teachers

Upon completion of the "Jenks Wild" experience, teachers will be able to:

1. Identify three members of the staff to serve as directors to organize and implement an experience-based approach to learning.
2. Develop a program of leadership training designed to provide the skills necessary for the three directors to assume the above mentioned responsibilities.
3. Facilitate an organizational structure in which all faculty members assume an active role in support of the environmental school project.

When organizing an experience-based approach to learning in a natural environment, it is important to have two to four teachers who become "environmental directors" and are able to delegate responsibility and work collectively. There is so much time involved in the planning that emphasis on working well together must be made at the onset. Evidence suggests that while organizing school related programs, teachers do take on administrative characteristics (Mooradan & Neice, 1986). The directors assumed administrative roles such as communicating with the varied publics; planning, organizing, and implementing the curriculum; overseeing scheduling and cabin assignments; and fiscal responsibilities such as fund raising and budgeting.

During the planning stages the directors served as key communicators. Organizationally, Jenks Central Middle School was operating under a hierarchical structure of chairpersons or heads for each academic department with certified faculty members under their supervision. The directors worked with the department chairs communicating the program's academic goals. The chairpersons then met with their respective faculty members and organized the curriculum for the program's three phases; pre-site, on-site, and post-site. Since most states already have prepared curriculum guides on environmental education, Project Wild (1986), a nationally funded educational organization, was contacted to present workshops for our faculty members and parent volunteers on request.

The department heads reported to the directors and the directors communicated goals and expecations with the parent volunteers. Parents were charged with organizing the volunteers who would serve as on-site counselors. It was vital that the directors served as liasons between parent counselors and certified faculty members. For example, workshops were held during the planning stages for parents on such topics as discipline, leading small groups of students, and assisting teachers with planned curricular activities.

Scheduling responsibilities, which included housing arrangements, medical care, and acquisition of teaching materials, (i.e. supplies, athletic equipment, and aides) were managed by the directors. In addition, the directors, teachers, and parent counselors were responsible for understanding and applying camp rules and safety procedures. Arrangements were made by the directors to have an infirmary staffed by a professional nurse during the week to address health needs. Health cards were completed for every participant and signed by a parent or guardian. The card contained information and requirements for medication. All medication was housed in the infirmary and administered by a registered nurse or physician. Full time medical personnel were available at all times in case of any emergencies.

Besides scheduling and organizing on-site personnel the directors organized a group of parents who were not attending the camp as counselors, but who were interested in assisting in some capacity. These parents were from the local Parent Teacher Action Group (P.T.A.G.). This group was instrumental in fund raising activities for scholarship purposes and for necessary teaching supplies needed for the environmental school.

The environmental school was used as a tool to unify the faculty. Teachers who were directly involved in the planning of the curriculum and activities moved away from traditional classroom assignments and lectures. These teachers began to contribute ideas and stretch their abilities. They were able to take risks. Teachers not directly involved with the project felt the enthusiasm for the camp and contributed by planning the curriculum for those students who remained on campus.

In conclusion, in identifying teachers to serve as program leaders, it is important to select teachers who possess administrative skills and work cohesively with all faculty members (Roland, 1985). The directors become the controlling factor of the environmental school. They must be able to speak to large groups of people, to communicate skillfully the goals of the program, and maintain staff organization, while motivating and enhancing staff morale.

It is further recommended that directors, teachers, and parents involved in the planning process visit the program site before attending the project with the students. Directors should provide the faculty and parent counselors an opportunity to learn the lay-out of the camp, the process for meal time activities, and shelter locations for inclement weather. This can be an all-day outing at the site or an overnight experience.

Students

Upon completion of the "Jenks Wild" experience, students will be able to:

1. Participate in a formal leadership training program to develop appropriate skills necessary to implement the environmental school program.
2. Accept leadership responsibilities during the three phases of the program, (i.e., pre-site, on-site, and post-site).
3. Be recognized and encouraged by the directors for their contribution to the total program.

The students are, of course, the primary target of the environmental school. Objectives for the school include both academic and affective components. "It was desired that each student return home a healthier, wiser, happier, more observant, and more self-reliant person because of this unique experience." (Environmental School Parent Handbook, 1986). The focus of the program was on interdisciplinary environmental education and building a strong community climate. The academic components were addressed through a curriculum implemented by the teachers. The building of group unity occurred by removing students from their traditional school setting and placing them in a new environment. A new social structure was created by the camp atmosphere, and this influenced student leadership.

Formal student leaders were involved in decisions concerning the environmental school from the onset. When determining a camp location, the directors recruited sixth graders from the student council to accompany them to visit nearby sites. These sixth graders were allowed to give as much input as parents, teachers, and administrators.

By involving formal student leaders in these initial stages the directors hoped to achieve a "snowball effect" of enthusiasm for the program. A class of twenty students, representing a cross section of the 6th grade, also helped generate ideas for the project. There were six elected student council members, six to ten "informal or situational leaders," (i.e. football players, cheerleaders, "popular kids") and six to ten marginal followers. Ideas were solicited from these students while camp processes and procedures were detailed. It should be noted here that this "elite" class was not selected by design but was one of the director's classes that showed an above average interest in the project.

Arriving at the project site, students found themselves in a situation foreign to many of them. An initial activity was to establish cabin rules necessary for a successful week (Note: Cabin assignments were given out only moments before leaving for the project site), with the counselors helping the twelve members of each cabin decide on a set of rules and consequences for the week. By allowing the students to create their own rules, enforcement became easier for the teachers and parents. During the initial cabin meetings situational leaders began to emerge. Those who had prior camp experience drew upon those experiences to help others.

The emergence of these situational leaders was present throughout this experience and served to solidify camp unity. These leaders helped us to draw conclusions about leadership that are supported by other research. According to Nappier and Gershenfeld (1981), we can "understand leadership as behavior in a situation, and as a dynamic relationship. . . we define leadership as those acts that help the group achieve its goals. . . leadership can, in principle at least, be performed by any member of the group" (p. 247).

Observations were made of the formal and informal leadership structure at the environmental school. As noted earlier, the informal leaders emerged in situations of expertise. This is not to suggest that formal leaders were inactive. Their leadership, however, was not by virtue of their "elected" position but by their ability to step forward and assume leadership responsibilities.

The leadership characteristics exhibited by students at the environmental school were supported by the counselors and teachers. All students were encouraged to participate in forming team bonds within the cabins, units, and camp. An area of concern to the directors was the negative behavior of traditional "trouble-makers," and how they would fit into this new environment. These fears were proven unwarranted in all cases.

In much the same way as Vision Quest promotes self-respect and social survival skills as an alternative to juvenile detention facilities, the environmental school took the "trouble-makers" and placed them into an environment where they could achieve success and demonstrate positive leadership skills (Goals & Objectives Handbook, 1986). An example was one of our "troubled" students who became an outspoken cabin leader continually encouraging and pushing his classmates to win the Best Cabin Award.

The environmental school experience was a positive one for all students involved. The results of these experiences were seen clearly in the last month of school. Discipline problems were reduced, and students seemed to carry a sense of unity with their classmates with positive self-images resulting.

Many of the environmental school experiences for students occurred more by accident than by design. In making recommendations for future projects, it is important to train our formal leaders better with a major thrust toward shared leadership responsibilities. Additionally, more in depth follow-up should be made of those situational leaders who emerged while on site. This would enable them to participate in other situations in which they are likely to emerge as leaders.

Parents

Upon completion of the "Jenks Wild" experience, parents will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an active partnership with certified faculty members in support of their child's education.
2. Serve as volunteers in at least one of the following required activities:
   a. activitiy leader
   b. counselor
   c. medical facilitator
   d. driver

An essential element for success in any school project are parents. They must be sold on the benefits of the program and assured of their children's safety. Most importantly the environmental school could not exist without parent volunteers to serve as cabin counselors. Recent trends in education reflect the necessity for community and parental involvement in the schooling of our youth. This project provided the opportunity for parents to serve as ad hoc volunteers.

Parents were involved in the initial planning of the program including the selection of the school site. This nucleus of parents served as a spearhead in helping to recruit and organize other volunteers. Their interest in the program led them to assume responsibility for scheduling parent participation on-site. (Many parents were unable to attend all week, so coordinating the part-timers became a need during the planning stage.) Once recruited, the parents were presented with a series of workshops to define and refine skills to be used at the environmental school.

Workshops were designed to introduce the parents to their role as cabin counselors. Activities in these workshops included a series of role-playing opportunities on "understanding the role of the counselor." Situations which were likely to occur at camp were acted out with a variety of solutions and conclusions were discussed. Areas for examination included meal times, lights-out, the reluctant student, orientation walk, ice-breaker activities for building cabin pride and unity, and developing a "bag of tricks" for the week.

Sessions were activity oriented with discussions on the parents' role in disciplining. The policy of the camp was designed so that parents were not responsible for disciplinary actions. The concerns were to be communicated by the counselors to the teacher in charge of the unit or a camp director. Parents were to help coordinate afternoon activities, such as fishing, hiking, ball games, art, etc. Participation in these activities depended upon the interests of the counselor and cabin members.

Three workshops and one afternoon outing at the camp site were provided. The afternoon workshop concluded the formal training and was held prior to the beginning of the on-site phase of the program. It was the purpose of these workshops to provide the parent counselors with an opportunity to get to know each other, to get to know the teachers, and to practice leadership skills with groups of students.

It was evidenced through the pilot program that the most effective parent counselors were those who possessed skills previously developed with other groups such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and Sunday school classes. The parents with these experiences became our informal counselor leaders during the program and assisted in training others.

Through this training the importance of open channels of communication between teachers and parent counselors in the development of team unity and efficient program operation were discovered. A workshop which included a presentation by the teachers to the parents regarding the planned curriculum was beneficial for the counselors but also enabled the teachers to evaluate strengths and weaknesses in their planning.

The special circumstances of the environmental school called for flexibility on the part of all participants. Daily meetings on-site with counselors and teachers immediately after the evening meal facilitated productive communication and flexibility in scheduling. Concerns were also addressed immediately. The meetings were initiated by the camp directors, but parent response was so positive that the meetings are mandatory for subsequent programs.

Parental involvement in this program must go beyond volunteerism. It must be a commitment to a partnership (Sandfort, 1987). Parent counselors served as partners with the teaching staff by involving themselves in the studies, activities, and free time provided at the environmental school. Instead of a "we-they" situation, an "Us" institution evolved. "Jenks Wild" was an opportunity to create a climate which fostered greater parent involvement and teacher cooperation. The sense of unity which the students felt was also evident among the parents. During the week parent counselors emerged as significant adults in the lives of our students. With minimum training they were able to unify cabins, involve students in activities, and control many small conflicts which arose. Parents exhibited many leadership qualities throughout the week and without them the school experience would not have been complete for many of the students. Many of these parents will become leaders in subsequent environmental school programs by sharing their acquired expertise.

Through parental input in the evaluation of the first environmental school program, recommendations included workshops to be structures as more participative and less lecturer oriented. The workshops should focus on specific skill development and practical knowledge needed for on-site participation. Further, it was recommended that parents become acquainted with the program's curriculum. They should also be provided with alternative "tricks" and strategies to use in motivating and dealing with middle school students.

Community Representatives

Upon completion of the "Jenks Wild" experience, community representatives will be able to:

1. Financially assist in implementation of environmental school programs.
2 Verbally demonstrate support program activities through a partnership with school representatives.
3. Communicate with school personnel about this and other related programs to close the communication gap between non-parent residents and the school.

A current trend in the nation is the coupling of goals between the business world and the public schools in the Adopt-a-School program. The environmental school project lends itself to revising this concept to a short-term commitment as an Adopt-A-Project program, which facilitates cooperative sharing of personnel from private enterprises into the public education arena (Reinhartsen, 1986). Through the solicitation of financial assistance from local businesses, community members became directly involved with the program, and communication between the school and the entire community was enhanced.

In determining the funding for the program, a cost per participant formula was used. Meals, lodging, transportation, insurance, and miscellaneous expenditures were considered. Students were encouraged to earn the fee by participating in community service projects such as yard work, babysitting, and other chores. Advertisements for these services were placed in the local paper, neighborhood flyers and posters circulated in local businesses. Since some students were unable to personally finance the project fee, local sponsors were solicited to provide scholarships. School officials made presentations at service organizations including the Rotary, Kiwanis, and the Chamber of Commerce. Serveral corporations and businesses within the community were approached in an attempt to secure funds and to increase their involvement with the school. Local foundations were also targeted for donations. It was through an anonymous corporate donation that the fee per camper was lowered.

Parent organizations raised funds for the camp by holding fund raising events which involved the entire school population. Involving the parents in school projects creates a spirit of cooperation and camaraderie with teachers (Novates, 1986). This allowed the parents to develop a greater appreciation and understanding of the role of teachers. Parents became welcome participants and talented contributors to this project.

Even though the schools are sometimes the largest business within a community, it has been frequently reported that in an average community, 70% of the adults have no direct relationship with the schools (Wilson, Bruceland, & Rossman, 1986). Through the efforts of community representatives in financially supporting the environmental school project, they became directly involved in program activities and facilitated open communication between the private and public sectors. As the community became personally involved with promoting the environmental school project an important residual effect appeared. It was evidenced that community members more actively promoted and supported other school-related issues after having been associated with the environmental school program.

Administrators

Upon completion of the "Jenks Wild" experience, Jenks central office administrators and the Jenks Central Middle School principals will be able to:

1. Recognize categories of decision making requiring a relations orientation.
2. Vary their individual behavior from situation to situation using diagnostic skills in the selection and application of the appropriate behavior.
3. Create situations that encourage the emergence of new leadership among faculty and students.

This public was least served by the "Jenks Wild" leadership development program. Progress made toward the achievement of objectives was more accidental than planned. Progress was made however, particularly in developing leadership skills among the project director as a result of the principal's participative leadership style. Future camps should focus more attention on this group because no determinant of organizational climate is more critical than the management role.

It is further recommended that orientation concerning central office administrative roles occur early in the planning stages so that there will be no confusion as to what clothing they should wear during their camp visits (which hopefully will take place at times other than PRESS DAY) and other routine matters such as participating with students in more activities, eating with students, and generally reflecting their sincere interest in students and faculty involved in the project.

It is recommended that an evaluative questionnaire be developed and administered to all participants in each of the five target groups following future camp projects. Each group would require an instrument designed to measure the success of activities planned to meet the specific objectives of that group. A pre-test, post-test activity to measure growth would be appropriate. Securing the services of an outside consultant group with public relations and/or evaluation skills to assist in the planning and implementation of future out-of-door projects should be considered.

CONCLUSION

One common element ran through the leadership development program. When the participants began with a bias relative to either institutional goals or individual needs, the experience caused them to recognize the value of the other dimension, e.g., self-centered student-to-team player, parents of child-to-group counselor, teacher-to-quasi administrator, principal-to-delegator or participative leader. Jenks Central Middle School sixth graders became more than the sum of the individual classes; they became a functional social system.

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